2: Dowson G-5 (1929-30) 1932 MHl Iraq MHl

is partly the outcome of historic causes and has partly been generated by differing local conditions and ethnic origins. Under Ottoman administration present-day el 'Iraq comprised the three vilayets of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra, each somewhat jealously watching, and watched from, the capital. This separatism was accentuated by divergent economic orientations. Mosul looked primarily northwards; Baghdad to Persia and the bordering desert; Basra to the sea. And superimposed on the traditional differences between the ancient vilayets were the more varied and more stubborn ones arising from differing natural conditions. Local social influences combined with these varying conditions to produce different practices, as well as to promote different policies, in different districts. 423 184

The general absence of reliable information was nevertheless baffling. For although principles are useful guides, and illuminating discussions can be based on generalities, which may or may not be true, a more dependable foundation is needed before measures of constructive reform can be confidently embarked upon. 423

8. My first care was to seek copies of all important previous papers dealing with the land problems of the country. Naturally many were unobtainable, while others were rare or fragmentary; but a number of those that remained call for gratitude and acknowledgment from a later worker in the same field. Several papers, written in the days of the early administration by experienced officers of the Indian Government, outlined measures for settlement which, if steadily applied and developed, should by now have gone far to mitigate, if not remove, the worst existing disabilities. Unfortunately, the promise of this preliminary work was interrupted and never took shape. 122 114

A fresh impetus seems to have been given to the consideration of reform by an extremely able "Note on Land and Revenue Policy" written by Mr. S. H. Longrigg, late Inspector General of Revenue, in May 1926. A series of most interesting and instructive discussions followed. But the writers commonly recognise the unavoidably academic nature of many of these discussions and the need to subject proposals to experimental trial, owing to the absence of adequate information of existing conditions. It is greatly to be regretted that such trials were not made. Measures of reform consequently continued to be confined to paper debates. This sterile result was ascribed to the lack of a formal acceptance and pronouncement by Government of its intended policy. Actually the fewer pronouncements of abstract policy that are made the better for the prospects of useful reform. The failure to do anything appears in fact to have been primarily due to the lack of a competent executive service charged with the study and conduct of such reform. 114 185

4. Even if there had been full and exact information available at the Headquarter Offices of Government, it would have been desirable that I should visit each province (Liwa) and get in touch with its conditions on the spot. The general lack of such information made it imperative to secure some expression of the great volume of local knowledge and experience of the actual operation of land tenure and its incidentals from day to day, that was dispersed throughout the country. 121

The procedure adopted for my inquiry while in el 'Iraq may be summarised under five heads. Firstly, I endeavoured to secure copies of all important correspondence and papers dealing with the land problems of the country as already mentioned.

Secondly, I drew up a questionnaire which was issued by the Ministry of the Interior to all provincial (liwa) authorities. This asked (i) for the 124

124 compilation of a map indicating the existing distribution of various categories of land in the liwa, (ii) for the preparation of numerical returns relating to population, to the various categories of land, etc., and (iii) a hundred important questions covering the main field of the investigation.

114 Thirdly, I studied at Headquarters the working of the Central Government services primarily concerned, as thoroughly as my immediate purpose required and the time at my disposal permitted.

124 Fourthly, I visited each of the fourteen liwas in turn and (i) discussed the main problems thoroughly with the Governor (Mutasarrif),
114 (ii) was taken to typical or specially instructive places, and (iii) met and questioned a number of other provincial officers, local notables, land holders and peasants. Owing to the previous circulation of the questionnaire, all provincial officers were well prepared for these discussions, while I also received very full written replies in all but every case.

124 Fifthly, I had the honour to be accorded several audiences by H.M. King Feisal as well as numerous interviews with Ministers, Deputies and others. And I also interviewed in Baghdad a number of experienced persons both European and 'Iraqi, with special knowledge and experience of land questions. Unfortunately owing to prolonged bad weather, which interfered with my touring programme and severely curtailed the time available for supplementing my information after its initial collection, it was not found possible to arrange meetings with some of those whom I was particularly anxious to see. I regret this very much, but greatly as they would have assisted me, I venture to believe that nothing they might have said would have seriously modified the main conclusions drawn from the mass of evidence collected.

000 5. Owing to the wideness of the field to be covered the five months that I spent in el 'Iraq were entirely occupied in collecting material which could not be digested until I got back to England. The records of the investigations fill more than forty dossiers. Naturally many gaps and uncertainties were discovered during the examination of this large body of material. This necessitated correspondence with Baghdad extending almost continuously over another six months. The attempt to obtain intelligible and consistent statistics was particularly troublesome.

It must not be thought that even this considerable volume of data covers the field wholly or unimpeachably, or that I can have escaped misinterpretations and errors. No such improvised body of information can be a satisfactory substitute for systematic public records and the accumulated experience of a competent and well organised public service able to concentrate on land problems. But the information and opinions collected, read in the light of experience elsewhere, do none the less enable the main evils to be diagnosed with confidence and the essential elements of constructive reform to be trustworthily indicated.

121 I have thought it advisable to explain the widening of the scope of my investigation and to outline the procedure adopted, so that the character and origin of my information is on record. But I have not attempted to reproduce the mass of conclusions which the material collected has yielded. This would fill volumes. And I have expressly excluded from consideration in this report many questions of the highest importance, which I have had to inquire about owing to their reaction on land tenure (e.g. methods of cultivation, of remuneration of labour, etc.), but which did not themselves directly constitute the subject of the inquiry. Again although it was necessary to study the special problems of each province (liwa) as far as time permitted, so as to get a